

An additional race of *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* (Stanley) from the Somali Arid District

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In a recent review of the geographical variation exhibited by the various populations of the Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* (Stanley), it was shown that the northern populations could be grouped into two subspecies on the basis of colour and size differences, one of which would require to be given a name (*vide* Clancey and Lawson, *Antea*, pp. 128–131). Study of further material collected at Garissa, on the Tana River, and at Kachileba, Suam River, north-east of Mt. Elgon, Kenya Colony, in January–February, 1961, by Mr. M. O. E. Baddeley, taxidermist of the Durban Museum, and material from Abyssinia and Eritrea (topotypical of *B. e. erythrorhynchus*) loaned from the American Museum of Natural History, New York, through the kindness of Dr. James P. Chapin, shows that *B. e. erythrorhynchus* is a name applicable to the large-sized highland birds (wings in adults of 115–125.5 mm.), and that the markedly smaller and rather paler form of the Somali Arid District of north-eastern Africa will require to be given a name.

Buphagus erythrorhynchus invictus, subsp. nov.

Description: Compared with recently obtained *B. e. erythrorhynchus* (Stanley), 1814: northern Abyssinia, slightly paler on the upper-parts, particularly over the head. Ventrally rather paler over the throat, breast less washed with olivaceous, and with the lower breast, flanks and abdomen whiter (about Cartridge Buff [pl. xxx], as against Cream-Buff [same pl.] [*vide* Ridgway, *Colour Standards and Colour Nomenclature*, 1912]). Markedly smaller in size, thus: wings (flattened) of 11 adult ♂♂ ♀♀ 108–113 (110.2), as against 115–121.5 (118.1) in 12 ♂♂ ♀♀ of *B. e. erythrorhynchus* (Clancey and Lawson, *loc. cit.*, give wings of eleven other specimens of this latter race as 115–125.5 [118.4] mm.).

Material examined: *B. e. erythrorhynchus*, 23; *B. e. invictus*, 11; *B. e. scotinus* Clancey and Lawson, 16; *B. e. caffer* Grote, 20.

Distribution: Somalia and adjacent south-eastern Abyssinia (Ogaden) and eastern Kenya Colony (west to about 39° E. long.). In the East African littoral south to about the mouth of the Tana R., south of which it intergrades with *B. e. scotinus*.

Type: ♂, adult. Garissa, Tana River, eastern Kenya Colony. 20th January, 1961. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 110, culmen (exposed) 14.5, tarsus 20.5, tail 82 mm.

Remarks: The name chosen for the new race is from the Latin *invictus*, unconquered, and figuratively meaning irrefutable.

Study of the geographical variation of *B. erythrorhynchus* requires to be undertaken almost entirely on the basis of recently obtained material, as the species is prone to fairly rapid foxing. Skins only a few years old become quite buffy over the head, probably as a result of carotenoid

staining from the red bill. As the Durban Museum collection contains very fresh material of the four races of the Red-billed Oxpecker, I propose to list and treat succinctly hereunder the characters and ranges of the forms for the benefit of other workers not so advantageously equipped.

(a) *Buphagus erythrorhynchus invictus* Clancey, 1961: Garissa, Tana R., eastern Kenya Colony.

Palest and smallest race. Upper-parts dark greyish olive with buffy overlay; throat and breast light grayish olive, the latter with slight olivaceous suffusion; lower breast, flanks and abdomen cartridge buff. Wings of ♂♂ ♀♀ 108–113 mm.

Range: A xeric race confined to Chapin's Somali Arid District (*vide* Chapin, *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part i, 1932, p. 90), ranging from Somalia to adjacent Abyssinia (Ogaden) and eastern Kenya Colony.

(b) *Buphagus erythrorhynchus erythrorhynchus* (Stanley), 1814: northern Abyssinia.

Slightly darker above and palpably more richly coloured below than the last race. Markedly larger in size. Wings of ♂♂ ♀♀ 115–125.5 mm.

Range: Eritrea and northern Abyssinia, southwards to the southern Sudan, Uganda and the highlands of Kenya Colony. Also reaching into the north-eastern Congo. A mesic race.

(c) *Buphagus erythrorhynchus caffer* Grote, 1927: Palala R., Zoutpansberg, Transvaal.

Only moderately well differentiated from *B. e. erythrorhynchus*. Slightly darker over the throat and breast, and paler and less buffy over the lower breast, flanks and abdomen. Ventral surface of tail without any trace of the cinnamon suffusion present in both *B. e. erythrorhynchus* and *B. e. invictus*. Wings of ♂♂ ♀♀ 119–124 mm.

Range: Like the nominotypical subspecies, a mesic form ranging from about the southern aspects of the Kenya Colony highlands, southwards through western and central Tanganyika Territory to Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, Southern Rhodesia, the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Natal and Zululand (*Note:* No recent Natal and Zululand specimens are currently available, owing to the widespread extirpation of the species through cattle dipping and game elimination, and the population of the territory concerned is only tentatively assigned to *B. e. caffer*).

(d) *Buphagus erythrorhynchus scotinus* Clancey and Lawson, 1961: Panda, Inhambane, Mozambique.

Darkest race. Darker and blacker on the upper-parts than *B. e. caffer* (about fuscous), and darker over the sides of the head and neck. On under-parts darker over the throat and breast, and more richly coloured over the lower breast, flanks and abdomen (about chamois). Wings of ♂♂ ♀♀ 115–125 mm.

Range: A hyric race of the eastern tropical littoral of Africa, extending from coastal Kenya Colony (population similar mensurally to *B. e. invictus*) and eastern Tanganyika Territory to northern and southern Portuguese East Africa. The population of Zululand may be referable to the present race and not *B. e. caffer*.

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